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Loyalty on the Frontier, or Sketches of Union Men of the South-West With Incidents and Adventures in Rebellion on the Border

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Review

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Bishop, A.W. and Scott, Kim Allen, Editor. *Loyalty on the Frontier, or Sketches of Union Men of the South-West with Incidents and Adventures in Rebellion on the Border.* University of Arkansas Press, \$29.95 ISBN 1557287570

Guerrillas in the Ozarks

Accounts of Arkansas's Unionists

In no section of the country has the Great Rebellion created such personal hate or separated more widely friends and relations than in the South-West, Lieutenant Colonel A.W. Bishop writes in the introduction to **Loyalty on the Frontier, or Sketches of Union Men of the South-West with Incidents and Adventures in Rebellion on the Border.** For 200 pages he recounts sometimes harrowing, often fantastic tales of the hardships faced and heroism shown by those Arkansians from the northwest corner of the state who chose to remain true to the Union. As an essential document that is made even more valuable by Kim Allen Scott's incisive editing, **Loyalty on the Frontier** is both a good read and a valuable resource that deserves its place on the shelf of any student of the Transmississippi Civil War.

Loyalty on the Frontier was originally published in the spring of 1863, when Bishop was serving with the First Arkansas Cavalry (U.S.), a hard-bitten group of guerrilla fighters recruited largely from Unionist refugees. Their stories, recorded by Bishop in his role as provost marshal for the First Arkansas, provide the basis for the bulk of the volume. Bishop also included documents that provide modern readers with context to the mindset of the people of Arkansas in the early stages of the war, such as: ordinances from the 1861 Arkansas secession convention, including one from the people of West Fork township expressing utter opposition to leaving the Union; an act of the Arkansas general assembly to prevent the giving of aid and comfort to the enemy; and a remarkably misspelled letter from Confederate partisan James Ingram. As

Bishop points out, Arkansas's leaving the Union was not a foregone conclusion in early 1861, and he reserves special scorn for those secession convention delegates who changed their votes to make it appear the state was unanimous in its desire to join the Confederacy.

Kim Allen Scott (an associate professor at Montana State University at Bozeman to whom every researcher of Civil War Arkansas should be grateful for his masterful compilation of Civil War resources at the University of Arkansas Libraries) ably edited Bishop's manuscript and provides an introduction that follows Bishop from Civil War soldier to university president to obscurity. Scott's endnotes give additional information on most of the people and incidents recounted in the book, while also debunking the patently fantastic tales of Bishop's Union men. Scott's footnotes also provide expanded portraits of some of the supporting characters, such as Union spy Captain Robert E. Travis and the Johnson brothers of Madison County, who received brief mention in Bishop's text but were themselves noteworthy players in the Ozarks guerilla war.

Bishop's writing style is mercifully short on Victorian excess, attributable in part, perhaps, to his prewar legal training. That is not to say that his writing is colorless. His descriptions of Keitsville, Missouri, as pestiferous a place as can be found above ground or of the First Arkansas Cavalry as the innocent shuttlecock between distant battledoors belie that conclusion. Bishop merely tells tales that are not lost in the hyperbole that makes such books as *Shelby and his Men* by John Newman Edwards an ordeal to read.

What makes **Loyalty on the Frontier** the most valuable is its contemporary recounting of the vicious fighting in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas and Missouri. Even though Scott warns that the details of their adventures are to be taken by modern readers with more than a few grains of salt, the general conditions faced by Bishop's Union men were horrific and they reacted to those conditions by banding together in the First Arkansas Cavalry and carrying terror to the marauders. So while DeWitt C. Hopkins' youthful filibustering in Cuba may have been cut from whole cloth, the highly personal fighting between Charles Galloway's Unionist company and Isaac Bledsoe's Rebel partisans was all too real, providing a paradigm of mountain guerilla war. These portraits, gathered while interviewing displaced Union sympathizers at Elkhorn Tavern, offer first-hand accounts of the high price paid by those who chose to remain loyal to the United States.

Mark K. Christ is the community outreach director for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, where among his other duties he works to preserve Arkansas's Civil War battlefields. He is the author of Getting Used to Being Shot At: The Spence Family Civil War Letters, editor of Rugged and Sublime: The Civil War in Arkansas and All Cut to Pieces and Gone to Hell: The Civil War, Race Relations and the Battle of Poison Spring, and co-editor with Cathryn H. Slater of Sentinels of History: Reflections on Arkansas Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.